

## HEPATITIS A Reportable Disease

Hepatitis A is an infection of the liver. It is the most common form of hepatitis infection in the United States. Among reported cases, the most frequent source of infection is household or sexual contact with a person who has hepatitis A, followed by attending or working in child care settings, recent international travel, or connection with suspected food or waterborne outbreaks.

### CAUSE

Hepatitis A virus

### SYMPTOMS

Usually starts suddenly with fever, tiredness, loss of appetite, and nausea. Dark (tea or cola-colored) urine, light-colored stools, and jaundice (yellowing of eyes or skin) may appear a few days later. Most children younger than 6 years of age (70%) do not show symptoms. Older children and adults with hepatitis A usually have symptoms, often including jaundice.

### SPREAD

Hepatitis A viruses leave the body through the stool of an infected person and enter another person when hands, food, or objects (such as toys) contaminated with stool are placed in the mouth. Spread can occur either by person-to-person contact or when people do not wash their hands after using the toilet or changing diapers and later prepare/handle food. Children may pass the virus to household members or child care staff without ever having symptoms. Hepatitis A can also be spread through contaminated food and water.

**INCUBATION** (time from exposure to onset of symptoms)  
14 to 50 days, usually about 28 days

### CONTAGIOUS PERIOD

From 2 weeks before to 2 weeks after symptoms begin. There is minimal risk of being contagious one week after the onset of jaundice.

### EXCLUSION

Child care and School: Until at least 1 week after onset of illness. Consult with your local or state health department. Each situation must be looked at individually to decide if the person with hepatitis A can spread the virus to others.

### DIAGNOSIS

A blood test (Hepatitis A IgM antibody test) is done to determine whether there is recent or current infection.

### TREATMENT

No specific medication is given to the person with hepatitis A.

### PREVENTION/CONTROL

- Hepatitis A vaccine is recommended for all children 12-23 months of age and should be considered for groups at increased risk for hepatitis. Those persons include international travelers, men who have sex with men, illicit drug users, and persons

with occupational risk. Vaccine should also be considered for those with chronic liver disease because they are at increased risk for severe problems.

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after using the toilet and changing diapers and before preparing or eating food. Staff should closely monitor handwashing of all children after children have used the bathroom or have been diapered.
- Clean and disinfect diapering area and potty chairs after each use and bathroom toilets, sinks, and toys at least daily, and when soiled.
- Clean and sanitize mouthed toys, objects, and surfaces at least daily and when soiled.
- If there is a case of hepatitis A in a child care or school, consult with the local or state health department. They will determine who has been exposed and make recommendations.

For more information please contact Contra Costa Public Health at 925-313-6740 and visit our website at <http://cchealth.org/hepatitis-a/>